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ABSTRACT

The material collected in this workshop report offers teaching techniques for technical writing instructors at universities and junior colleges. The variety of topics indicates both the broad impact of technical writing and the many specific needs of technical writers. The workshop's discussions and papers focused on a variety of needs and audiences faced by technical writing instructors, including writing engineering reports, company newspapers, and proposals combatting the "nominal style," writing the job application letter, ways in which the tutorial method and individualized instruction can be used in technical writing classes, technical writing as a general studies option or for special populations, and publication opportunities for technical writing instructors and other teachers. (RL)

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NOTES AND PAPERS

Workshop on the Teaching of Technical Writing

SIU Touch of Nature

October 21-22, 1977

Southern Illinois University
Carbondale, Illinois

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CS 204 169

Southern Illinois
University at Carbondale
Carbondale, Illinois 62901

School of Technical Careers

NOTES AND PAPERS

FROM THE FIRST ANNUAL WORKSHOP ON THE TEACHING OF TECHNICAL WRITING SIU-C TOUCH OF NATURE, OCTOBER 21-22, 1977

These papers represent addresses by speakers, excerpts from taped presentations and discussions, and other selected portions of the proceedings of the workshop.

We hope, too, that what we have collected in some small way reflects the camaraderie which we shared and the commitment evidenced in the meetings. Here we were together for a few hours, discovering interests and sharing ideas, reaching out in new directions.

Let's be glad for all that. Looking forward to the next sessions, we are

Paul H. Morrill Vivienne V. Hertz
Editors and Co-chairmen

TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATUS-OF-THE-ART: THE TEACHING OF TECHNICAL WRITING
Donald H. Cunningham 1

EDITING ENGINEERING REPORTS
Don Bush 6

COMMUNICATING TO EMPLOYEES: THE INDUSTRIAL HOUSE ORGAN
David N. Bateman 11

A REPORT ON REPORTS: TEACHING THE WRITING EXPECTED OF TECHNICIANS. Daniel K. McCann 15

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION FOR THE TECHNICAL STUDENT
Vivienne Hertz 17

TEACHING PROPOSAL WRITING
Irene B. Hawley 20

COMBATTING THE NOMINAL STYLE
David M. Kvernes 23

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS
Jewell Friend 26

THE TECHNICAL ADVISOR FOR STUDENT RESEARCH REPORTS
Paul Harre 29

THE CHALLENGE OF THE JOB APPLICATION LETTER
E. Michael Walsh 32

TECHNICAL WRITING AS A GENERAL STUDIES OPTION
Roy Weshinskey 35

TEACHING TECHNICAL WRITING THROUGH THE TUTORIAL METHOD
Paul H. Morrill 38

COURSES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS
Don Bush 41

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS OF TECHNICAL WRITING. Donald H. Cunningham 43

TWO-YEAR POST-SECONDARY INSTRUCTORS AS NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNERS: TEACHING FACULTY MEMBERS HOW TO PUBLISH
Alice Philbin 45

CRITIQUE OF WORKSHOP
Henry Dan Piper 49

WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS 53

STATUS-OF-THE-ART: THE TEACHING OF TECHNICAL WRITING

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Technical writing, by whatever name it is called, is an academic discipline whose time has come. We who are gathered here for this workshop--whether we have been teaching the course for fifteen years or have been assigned the course next semester to teach for the first time--are sitting on the tip of an emerging iceberg.

Two recent surveys conducted by the Education Development Committee of the Society for Technical Communication report the status of technical writing in our nation's schools. A 1972 survey revealed that nearly four hundred schools offered at least one course in technical communications. A 1975 survey indicated that at least nineteen schools have degree-granting programs in technical communication. If you are aware of the difficulty in conducting such surveys, you know the futility of trying to identify every course and program in existence. It is safe to assume, as did the authors of the STC report, that more schools offer a course or degree in technical communication than were identified by these two surveys. As the authors state, "Most schools that provide scientific and technical education have at least one course in technical writing."[1]

As varied as these technical communications courses surely are, they share one common goal: to teach students how to present information in clear and useful ways to specific audiences. Although it does not really prove anything, and although there are as many disadvantages to pigeon-holing as advantages, it might be helpful--at least for the moment--to sort technical writing courses into two broad categories: the upper-level course that serves junior, senior, and graduate students, and the lower-level course that serves freshmen and sophomores.

The upper-level course is designed to teach future technicians, engineers, and scientists the principles of writing the kinds of reports they will be expected to write in their future professional work. It is also designed to help them write class reports, term papers, and theses while in the university. The organization of the course usually centers on "the special technique of technical writing"--mechanism, description, process description, definition, classification, analysis of data, and on the format, scanning aids, and graphics, and the handling of documentation.

Students who enroll in the course are excellent. John S. Harris of Brigham Young University, in an unpublished paper, has described them well:

> Engineering and the physical sciences attract some of the brightest minds in the university, and by the junior year, academic attrition has eliminated most of the sluggards and dullards. The students that remain are used to a good deal of hard work and capable of learning if given the chance and the challenge.[2]

The lower-level course may be called technical writing, business writing, vocational English, occupational writing, or simply Communications II. For simplicity's sake, I should like to call this course occupational writing, the writing that links together people in the world of work. It links businessperson to businessperson, management to labor, business to government, engineer to technician, buyer to seller. Occupational writing provides the records that industry and government need to function year by year. Basically, occupational writing consists of correspondence and reports. Because reports often must be made orally, a unit on oral communication is usually included.

Students who take this course may be in a vocational or technical institute, a 2-year college, or a pre-professional university program. They are practical, industrious, and are willing to work when shown what needs to be done. Being of a practical turn of mind, these students want to learn good communication practice in a realistic way--a way longer on real-life communication situations than on theory.

What about the teachers of these courses? Quite frankly, they have suffered an identity crisis until very recently. For a long time they felt that they belonged on the periphery of their department and profession. As recently as 1973, Thomas Wilcox, in his book <u>The Anatomy of College English</u>, reported that "members of the department who teach in these programs technical writing are often an embattled band who see themselves slighted and their course depreciated by their literary colleagues."[3] But I think the battle for status is over. The present image of the teacher of technical writing is good, it has never been better, and it can become even greater.

One reason the image is improving is that more and more senior faculty are becoming involved with the course. At my university the director of graduate studies in English (a professor who also happens to be the faculty representative on the Board of Regents) teaches the course. So does another professor besides me. Another--an associate professor who teaches creative writing and the Chaucer seminar--makes the fourth senior faculty member who teaches technical writing. In addition to us are three assistant professors who sometimes teach the course. I say "sometimes" because the four senior faculty jealously regard the course as theirs. From the number of SIU faculty in this workshop the situation must be similar here.

Another reason the image is improving is because teachers are being hired to teach technical writing and are being promoted when they do well. English departments no longer ignore the fact that non-English majors and technology, engineering, and science students, alumni, and faculty regard technical writing as the most important course English teachers teach.

You are probably aware that the U.S. Office of Education's projected figures indicate that nearly 17 out of every 20 college students will major in an academic area outside the humanities. It seems reasonable to me that over half the writing courses offered as service courses will become some form of technical or occupational writing.

Corporately and professionally the teacher of technical writing has arrived. The National Council of Teachers of English recognizes the importance of the course. The NCTE Committee on Scientific and Technical Writing has been renewed for another three years. The Society for Technical Communication has become increasingly active in its educational mission. The Association of Teachers of Technical Writing numbers nearly five hundred members, including teachers and technical communicators in Canada, Australia, England, Holland, Israel, Japan, and Korea.

Our future is bright. Let me end by identifying three ways we can avoid bungling such future prospects.

First, we should ignore the still-to-be-heard charge that technical writing courses are pedestrian and mechanical, and are counterproductive to the aims of a liberal education. If any person is feckless enough to allege that technical writing is not a part of liberal education, refer him or her to Gilbert W. Chapman's "Specific Needs for Leadership in Management," printed in Toward the Liberally Educated Executive. He states:

> Management is deeply involved in the art of communication and often success and profit depend upon it. Eventually all communication must be communicated, either orally or in writing. The ability to express oneself and the ability to understand what is expressed are absolute prerequisites for successful executive performance.[4]

We will never persuade some of our colleagues that technical writing is not a second-class activity, for they regard any practical art as a second-class activity. To those who are unwilling to believe, I can only quote Thomas M. Sawyer's closing comments in a paper he presented last spring at the 1977 Conference on College Composition and Communication:

> ...If science, and its partner, engineering, have indeed conquered a place in society both in man's thought and in his practice....then

> it may be argued that the dissemination of scientific and technical information through technical writing may do more to influence men's actions than the writing of books and articles on the more literary subjects of the arts, classics, and finance. It might even be argued that technical writing is just as humanistic--and thus presumably as worthy of respect by those concerned with the human condition--as artistic writing because it tells man what he wants to know and needs to know in order to survive.[5]

For those who already believe, nothing more need be said. For those who do not believe, anything more that we can say will not convince. The problem is theirs, not ours.

My second point is that we should work hard to prepare new teachers of technical writing. Much of what we teach is effective, but we must learn how to teach it more exactly, more efficiently, and more confidently. As technical and occupational writing courses increase, we will have to recruit the less experienced, sometimes reluctant retreaded faculty. If we want to maintain or improve our status, we must provide the means to prepare the new teachers. For the immediate future this may actually result in increasing the competition for job openings. However, the ultimate result will be better technical and occupational writing courses, and that will result in an even greater demand for our courses. Workshops like this one are excellent ways to help develop teachers.

My third point--and last point--is that we should develop ways to impart the rhetoric of technical writing to our students. We should withstand the temptation to go on and on in the classroom about rhetorical and communicative theory, "talking" about writing and causing students to hold knowledge in their hands a long time before they see it in practice or get the chance to use it. We should find ways to allow students to learn writing strategies while practicing realistic communication assignments rather than present deductively monolithic segments of theory to them while they sit passively. We should draw our dictum from Joseph Conrad, who wrote in the preface to <u>The Nigger of the Narcissus</u> that his purpose was

> before all, to make you <u>see</u>. That, and no more, and it is everything. If I succeed, you shall find...all you demand, and perhaps, also that glimpse of the truth for which you have forgotten to ask.

If we use the oldest advice ever given to a writer--<u>show, don't tell</u>--our students will demonstrate for themselves what works in technical writing.

What I find, then, in looking at the status-of-the-art today is that, first of all, technical writing is an academic discipline that is now firmly established in our nation's schools. Second, there appears to be a need to distinguish between an upper-level and a lower-level course--perhaps distinguishing them by the titles technical writing and occupational writing. Third, the students in these courses are excellent and hardworking. Fourth, the status of the technical writing teacher is good and is going to get better.

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[1]Thomas E. Pearsall and Frances J. Sullivan, Academic Programs in Technical Communication (Washington, D.C.: Society for Technical Communication, 1976), p. 1.

[2]John S. Harris, "The University Course in Technical Writing: Pragmatism in the Ivory Tower," unpublished paper.

[3]Thomas W. Wilcox, The Anatomy of College English (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass Publishers, 1973), p. 59.

[4]Gilbert W. Chapman, "Specific Needs for Leadership in Management," in Toward the Liberally Educated Executive, ed. Robert A. Goldwin and Charles A. Nelson (New York: Mentor Books, 1960), p. 5.

[5]Thomas M. Sawyer, "The English Teacher in a College of Engineering," unpublished paper.

Q: What do you suggest when an instructor is starting a technical writing class?

A: When I started, we looked at every text on technical and business writing we could get our hands on. I have mixed reactions about going laterally across campus and talking with other faculty. A lot of that is good, but you can't make the course out of what those people want done.

Q: How do you go about impressing on students the reality of the amount of writing they'll be called upon to do?

A: By visiting companies you can get an idea of the magnitude. I'll never forget the time I visited the G.E. Jet Propulsion Plant in Cincinnati. Larry Pathe, the head of the technical writing section, spoke of some 95,000 black and white photographs and 200,000 pages of written material produced yearly by his staff. Yet it represented only 6% of the writing that went on in the plant. The rest was done by the non-professionals employed in various capacities in the plant.

EDITING ENGINEERING REPORTS

Don Bush, Technical Editor
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I think that there is a career opportunity for editors as well as writers in technical writing. Technical writing in industry is bad and, worse yet, many times it is dull. In this presentation I'm going to do what I do in my classes, I'm going to let you tell me what's wrong with technical writing in industry. Your list includes jargon, not defining a purpose, excessive emphasis on raw data rather than on conclusions, more on past than present, words that are too long, passive voice that buries the action--{That's an interesting one because in many technical courses they teach you to use the passive voice rather than active voice. I think that there has to be both.}--too many nouns, too technical. We could go on, but I think you get the idea of what I'm talking about. And these questions are far more important than the question of "data is" or "data are."

Some of these problems you've described affect communication and some do not. Most of them do. I was glad to see that no one really did mention grammar. No one mentioned punctuation. These concerns are far more important. You take the word "ain't." "Them designs ain't been no good." A very clear statement, isn't it? He's saying that "them parts hasn't passed the test." What we're after in addition to some of these things in communication is to maintain a certain dignity, aren't we? A certain dignity within our own profession, within our own industry, within our university, with the people that we're around. So we do have two goals. We have clarity, which we're talking about here, and we also have dignity.

The same holds with the spelling of accommodate. You can accommodate with one "m" and people will certainly understand what you mean, especially if that's the way they spell it themselves. No problem. But there's a certain dignity that's lacking. In technical writing generally we're doing a pretty good job with the dignity factor. If we have a choice between dignity and clarity, we invariably choose dignity. So what we need to work on are some of these other problems. Now I admit that dignity is important. Long words and sentences, the oratorical style, addressing the assembled masses at the Philadelphia Democratic Convention. I enjoy some of that myself. That's what makes writing fun.

But I do think that industry is paying too much attention to such dignified concerns and not enough attention to things that you mentioned and that every group mentions about what's wrong with technical writing.

Earlier I mentioned that there is a career opportunity for editors; what makes the career is the bad writing. The job, however, exists at two levels. Type I is the style book editor who goes through and makes the work respectable. This editor emphasizes correctness, standardization, and consistency. He or she functions more like a proofreader without understanding the content. Every time he sees the name of a club he capitalizes it. He's also required to perform in both typical aerospace applications and big engineering applications. He handles routine copy jobs like numbering figures and measuring copy, taking it to the printer, getting approvals--and all similar kinds of things. He typically will take a piece of copy from the time it is first written.

Well, my job, and where I think the real opportunities are, is something different than that. My suggested Type II, a technical editor, is someone who understands the technical jargon if he can, at least he tries. And he edits or revises heavily to bring out the message that may or may not be there. He also corrects grammar as he goes, with his left hand, but the emphasis is on correct and readable technical content. Now the most important thing that I see in correcting nearly all these things is that technical writing is entirely too wordy. And this characteristic certainly goes through academic writing.

I'd like to explain what I do with a sheet of copy. All of those black marks are crossed out. It says something like "Phase B indicates that the only flight testing involved is that which should be accomplished in the space shuttle to satisfy these needs are the same as those...." You can see that perhaps in this particular case half the words can come out without losing any meaning. Some of them aren't drastic, but most of the pages are that bad. In fact, some are so bad that it doesn't take much skill to be able to improve them. We also find all kinds of funny mistakes. Every editor has a collection of these. The editing that I do is recognizable to most of you as journalism technique. With a background in journalism that's what I use, of course. There's another journalism technique that I use--finding a lead. I try to find what begins a story--the summary statement at the beginning--whatever it is that sets the scope of the writing. It may not be the answer, it may be the problem.

I use another technology, the technology of semantics, general semantics. The word is not the thing. Though I think it's a valuable concept that the program supervisor outranks the project supervisor. Since it may not be apparent, I think you have to explain what these people do. Operational definitions--what a thing does rather than what it is. "A typewriter is a machine that types letters," rather than "a typewriter is a box and weighs so much, etc."

The important thing about a typewriter is that it aids the typist. Abstract versus concrete--backing opinion with facts, or as Hayakawa would say "extensional versus intentional."

This idea of classification is also very interesting. You can sometimes turn night into day by simply calling the thing a different thing by putting it into a different classification. Disadvantages become advantages. Your airplane is overweight, so what do you do? You explain the advantages of that overweight airplane. Since you didn't get the data when you went to California, you came back empty handed. But you still have to come up with a program. You say this is what I'm going to do now, in spite of the fact that I didn't get that data. You turn the disadvantage into an advantage, or at least considerably neutralize that disadvantage.

The third technology that I use is English. That's the thing I really want to talk about. I think that a Type II editor, the one I think I am, explores new paths where there are no rules. And I think this is an opportunity that you as English teachers might have. For instance, there's no rule that an English teacher has to say the "little red schoolhouse" instead of the "red little schoolhouse." No native speaker will say the "red little schoolhouse." Or the "old little poor lady." Or do they? They do it all the time in technical writing. There's no rule--look in the books. What an English teacher can do is say, "This is not the idiom of the language." Our language enters into the dictionary through the spoken words except for a few names and technical terms. So I make war on such phrases as and/or or {s} to indicate that there may be one or more. You can't say it. They should say one or more pieces, or just pieces.

English teachers can also help with structure. It starts with time spent on outlines, but not too much time since that's wasteful. But at least an outline will tell you enough to let you know when you're finished. It amazes me that we have no emphasis on paragraphs in technical writing. We need to study various kinds of paragraphs, the different kinds of topic sentences, placement of topic sentences, and length of the paragraphs. All that goes on in freshman English and is receiving no emphasis in technical writing. We act as though the section numbers organize things for us. They don't because you can put any number on that section. It's arbitrary and it's distinct from the matter that's in the paragraph. The paragraph has to be well organized, and I would urge you to teach your students about paragraphs. No book can ever be written without paragraphs, but a circular can be written without section numbers. All that furor that goes on about how many digits you're using is irrelevant when it comes to organizing the writing.

What about sentences? The man who can write the simple declarative sentence can write his own ticket, as the old saying goes. Little techniques like putting the subject next to the verb,

putting the modifier next to what it modifies, putting the adverb somewhere, preferably at the end or at least out of the way.

Another very important principle is parallelism. In this you do mix English technology in with engineering. I try to do that all the time. We have too much emphasis on sentence variety. A lack of variety is not one of the things from which we suffer. From these enormous sentences, 49-50 words, we get a lot of sentence variety. A structured sentence, on the other hand, is refreshing.

Parallelism and sentence structure imply grammar. Earlier I said that I didn't believe that grammar was terribly important: content is all. Now I would like to make a distinction and distinguish what I might call constructive grammar and destructive grammar. Constructive grammar would include concerns such as parallelism, sentence structure, and even diagraming sentence structure to teach people what goes where in a sentence and to help them build a sentence. The destructive grammar is based on prohibitions like "irregardless" and "data is" versus "data are." It doesn't really help much and it's completely negative. We ought to mention it, but not spend a lot of time on it. Spend your time on the grammar that gives the person an idea of structure.

I also think that English technology can concentrate more on words, not necessarily on vocabulary. We have the bad habit in technical writing, probably imposed by the military, to call something by the same name every time we discuss it. It really gets monotonous. A Gemini can be a space vehicle, capsule, and space craft. Along with more variety in words, we also need more pronouns. Our technical writing is gritty with nouns. As to fear about antecedents, just see that the antecedent refers ordinarily to the subject of the previous sentence, not the last noun in the sentence. That's really where much of the confusion comes in about indefinite antecedents. If there is a question because of the antecedent, you're better off to go ahead with the word, perhaps not the complete word but part of it. If you talk about Webster's New Seventh Collegiate Dictionary, then you'd probably want to call it the dictionary the next time you used it, rather than repeating the title or using WNSCD.

When we're talking about technical writing, we're basically talking about expository writing. It doesn't really differ much from a news article, non-fiction magazine articles, newsy letters, history, or even advertising. It really doesn't vary that much, but it is quite different from essays or from short stories and some of the things ordinarily in the English curriculum such as plays and poetry. Although we can learn much from poetry--short words and short sentences. Some people say that technical writing is too jerky with short sentences. Look at poetry. It's not jerky.

This brings us to a rather startling conclusion. English teachers, despite the bad press you've been getting, it seems to me that we do not need more grammar in our English instruction. You need less emphasis on grammar, but it is my opinion--not industry's. Industry is hung up on grammar, the correctness syndrome. For a person that's going to be hired to correct grammar (he needs at least sixth grade grammar) will find that the format will be set by his boss.

I think that an engineer really does not need grammar, spelling, and punctuation as much as he needs structure and logic in his courses. Of course, he can cover these on the side, but why not in his training? Think also about the kind of editors that we are going to need more and more in industry and that you people will help supply. They might need broad instruction in English that includes my favorite--semantics, introductory linguistics, certainly some advanced grammar, some statistics, and, of course, just as much advanced math and technical subjects as you can manage to cram into the curriculum.

Q: Even though you do not wish to emphasize grammar, don't you find that you have to identify vocabulary?

A: Yes. I think the diagramming of sentences helps and has to go on. But this process is vastly different from discussing data is and data are.

Q: I've noticed that English departments pay more attention to coherence than to cosmetic errors. Do you agree?

A: Perhaps this goes back to an interesting survey done in 1948 by Harper's magazine. They interviewed numerous groups of business people, housewives, teachers, and college professors. They found the most conservative to be high school English teachers, the most liberal college English teachers.

Q: From my own experience I found a difference between formal style and the style that management expects.

A: The technique that I advise people to use is to take the writing to the supervisor, hand him a pencil and ask him for his contribution to the text. Once he has made some corrections, the writing becomes his, too. Then, if necessary, he may be more willing to defend the text.

Q: Don't you also mean that once he has made those corrections, don't plan to change those words?

COMMUNICATING TO EMPLOYEES: THE INDUSTRIAL HOUSE ORGAN

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Introduction. The term "house organ" today is archaic. Business and industry have found improved synonyms for describing the employee communication vehicle. The terms "communication," "communication systems," "internal communications," and "employee information" are now used instead of the supposedly "old-fashioned" term "house organ." "House organs" may be out of fashion. But today more than ever, effective information transmission to employees via some formal scheme is important. Whatever it is called, the company newspaper, newsletter, or company magazine is still the backbone of industrial employee communications.

Modern technologies permit companies to be much more sophisticated communicators today. For example, elaborate telephone information services that will not only give the employee a weather report also provide the latest company news. The traditional house organ was a one-way communication tool. Today there are various kinds of two-way systems. Going far beyond the old suggestion box, employees can submit written questions and complaints to management and receive an individually written response. Some firms even save the employee the trouble of having to write their question or complaint. A taped telephone system records the employees' questions. The situation is investigated and the employees receive a written response.

These developments are innovative, responsive and are serious attempts to establish dialogue with their employees. These developments are to be applauded. But, today the hallmark of internal employee communications across the country is still the old-fashioned "house organ."

Improving House Organs. Company newspapers are not terribly old. The house organ came into wide circulation in the early 1940's. Many new employees, primarily women, entered the workforce and firms discovered a need to communicate. Also, when the men returned from service and re-entered the factory, the employee had changed. In both instances there was a need to provide information to employees. Companies responded by creating their in-house newspapers and magazines.

Today, many firms have over thirty years of experience in communicating to employees via the house organ. With that kind

of track record, one would assume that the efficient American business enterprise would be most effective in relating germane information to employees. Certainly, there are examples of excellence in employee communications--General Electric, Caterpillar Tractor, and U.S. Steel. But, when the total population of firms is viewed, one quickly finds an unfortunate situation. If many companies marketed their products to customers as they communicate their ideas to employees, they would have gone bankrupt years ago.

The Problem--Companies developed house organs, found a format, and have been replicating it over and over. That would be fine except the population has changed. The employee at every level in the company has attained more education. The employee at every level of the organization has increased aspirations. And, the employee at every level of the firm sees wider horizons today (via public media).

The old mix of articles in the company newspaper is passé. Yet, company after company keeps trying to market stale ideas to their employees. Such "oldies" include: 1) an employee's favorite vacation, 2) the employee's service anniversary, and 3) the promotion of an executive. Coverage of these repetitive subjects does not satisfy the employees' need for germane information about the firm.

The Solution--House organs are not out of date; it's just that often their content is moldy. The traditional in-house newspaper should be the flagship of the company's communication program. But, if the house organ is to lead the way, it must address topics that will catch the employees' attention and interest.

Further, top executives must recognize all the functions of management. Most managers are cognizant that they must plan, organize, staff, control, and direct. The function they seem to neglect is to communicate. Management has a responsibility to communicate to its employees. It means discovering ideas relevant to employees working in the last quarter of the twentieth century.

What Employees Want to Know. In studies of companies[1] and public institutions[2] in the 1970's, there is a recurring theme concerning what employees want to know from their employer.

Product or Service--The "sophisticated" white collar manager often has a wide knowledge of the organization. The executive has the opportunity to see the horizon. However, the employee in the "trenches" does not. It is not that the employee is uninterested. But, when one is in the "foxhole" all day, it is difficult to be cognizant of the overall "war plan."

It is management's responsibility to provide the overall picture. And, the in-house organ is the best way to provide this

information. Employees have an insatiable thirst for articles and pictures about the firm's product and/or service. This information permits employees to stick their hands out of the "foxhole" and gain a wider purview of the wider concerns of their employer.

Organization's Progress--People like to be associated with a winner. Employees like to know what kinds of progress their employer is making. What are the new developments to make the firm more efficient? What new products or services are being launched? What is the organization doing to stay ahead of the competition? By addressing the progress of the firm, the employer is not only satisfying a basic information need of the employees--the firm is aiding employees' security. And generally more secure employees are more productive and motivated.

Fringe Benefits--Over one-third of companies' personnel services expenditures are made in purchasing fringe benefits for their workers. Companies spend thousands of dollars on communicating to employees. But, so often the company does not put these two important pieces of the puzzle together.

Although the union may have negotiated the various fringes for the employees, it is the company that foots the bill. Again, it is management's responsibility to relate this information to the workers. It is amazing the enormous misconceptions employees have about their fringes. It is incongruent that the employer spends so much to purchase these items and then neglects to communicate with the employee about them.

People Contributions--Often the work of the employee is dull. It may be difficult for the employee to find very much pride that can be attributable to the work. But, employees make various contributions. Their fellow employees are interested in learning about those achievements. The contribution may be job related, e.g., a more efficient way of doing some work, or it may be a contribution to society, e.g., being a topnotch scout leader or Y-coordinator.

The contributions of employees in making the organization more efficient or in making society better are of interest to employees. Articles dealing with these important issues should be included in the modern house organ.

Business Performance--Profitability, expansion, and employment levels are no longer topics solely for the executive suite. Employees have a right to know how the firm is doing. Is it succeeding as a business? The employee in the 1970's can understand the information and wants to know it. Certainly the business data may not always be favorable. But, it is a responsibility of the organization to keep employees informed about the organization's business performance.

The New Orientation--Management must move to a higher level and address the employee on issues that have a direct effect on the employees' well-being. That is, they must communicate on topics that directly relate to the employees' employment and their needs as human beings.

Conclusions. The term "house organ" may be old, but in-house communications with employees are still very important. The organization has the media; the basic problem is that it has been transmitting the wrong message. Management cannot shirk its responsibility for relating germane information to employees. In actuality, the communication responsibility is one of the easier responsibilities for the manager to fulfill. And, when companies communicate to employees on issues that are germane, the communication responsibility is one of the most rewarding functions the manager can initiate.

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[1]David Bateman, "What Employees Want to Know--This Year," Journal of Organizational Communication (1975/6), pp. 10-11.

[2]_____. "What Interests Employees at a Comprehensive University," unpublished study, September, 1977.

Q: What about the problem of credibility?

A: The big secret of being a credible communicator is the willingness to address both the good and bad news. If the plant is going to be closed down, let the employees know. Be ahead of the grapevine in reporting the news. They're going to find out anyway, so you need to provide the accurate information.

Q: What about production costs?

A: It depends upon how often you publish. Some current information that needs to be disseminated is related to retirement programs. There is a need to explain federal regulations as they affect pension plans. Who writes this information? Usually it is the person who writes the house organ.

Corporations can be taught to communicate. I can show them a three year plan on how to communicate with employees to avoid a strike. It takes a sophisticated approach, and the company has to be willing to talk about possibilities. Some might say, "If employees know that, they'll make more demands the next time we negotiate." While it is not realistic to expect the employee to believe everything the company has to say, we should realize he is bombarded with information from another side. The corporation should have the oppportunity to provide the employee with information from their side. Why must we assume that the employee can only understand one side of an issue?

A REPORT ON REPORTS: TEACHING THE WRITING EXPECTED OF TECHNICIANS

Daniel K. McCann
Director of Technical Writing Curriculum Development
Vincennes University

The greatest problems the instructor of a composition course usually faces are those of student attitude. Unless the student is interested in the course and sees it as beneficial, he may not cooperate as needed when communications skills and strategies are introduced. Therefore, the instructor must find a way of making the course interesting to the student and also of establishing as soon as possible the relevance of the course to the student's career.

I have found one activity to be especially effective in dealing with these matters in classes that I have taught for the School of Technical Careers and the Department of English at Southern Illinois University at Carbondale, and for the Department of English at Vincennes University. A unit dealing with paperwork in the student's field answers these problems, extends the knowledge and pride of the student in his field, and introduces him to facets of other fields which he had never before appreciated.

At first in my career as a teacher of tech writing, I skipped teaching reports. I taught business letters and the long research/library paper, but I shied from memos, standardized forms, and other paperwork which actually form the larger part of what the student will eventually write in his occupation. I justified my sin of omission by acknowledging that every business will have different forms and formats for whatever communication is required on the job. When the student obtained employment, he would learn the specifics.

Finally, I decided, with some degree of nailbiting, that I would have to treat specific pieces of technical writing in individual fields. Otherwise, my claims about the usefulness of the course would start sounding very hollow. I had no way of knowing all the writing tasks that face the auto mechanic, electrical technician, funeral director, architectural draftsman, dental hygienist, or civil construction technician. I resorted to a common tactic of the embattled teacher: I let the students teach themselves.

In this activity I assign each student to ask his technical advisor, instructors or professionals already in the field, about the kinds of paperwork involved in the occupation. Any written communication required by the worker as part of his job is technical communication, about which the student should know.

After he asks around, the student writes a short report to me in the form of a memo or letter, informing me of what kinds of reports are common in the field. The brief descriptions identify basic formats the reports use.

At the same time I assign the written report on paperwork, I also assign an activity due a week or so later in which each vocation represented in the class is responsible for presenting an oral report, with appropriate visuals, which treats paperwork in the field. The vocational group gathers during class time to decide who among them will present the report. I make no limitations on how many or few do speak, but I request that every member of the vocation contribute in some fashion to the final presentation, if only through designing a visual aid. Usually one or two of the group are delegated to be the spokespersons. Everyone in the vocation present on the day of the activity receives a grade for the report, although the person or persons doing the actual speaking receive a bonus on their grade in consideration of their extra effort.

The benefits of the activity are many. It allows members of any one field to become better acquainted with each other. It provides practice in brainstorming a problem and in the pooling of talents and information. The student almost always learns more about his field and, often to his astonishment, about the numerous written communications required in even the most seemingly manual field, once the worker advances past the lowest job positions. Further, the student gains a greater respect for other fields. And he learns that no field completely escapes paperwork.

At the same time, the student learns something of how paperwork must be done. He begins to realize that what he learns in the tech writing course has a direct bearing on his job future. He begins to see how mistakes in spelling, grammar, or paragraph organization could cost him good relations with co-workers or customers. He begins to realize that communication skills are required to advance in any business. Once the student realizes the importance of tech writing for obtaining and keeping a job, and for advancing in his field, it is much easier to hold his attention and make him realize the importance of the class.

Students go through technically oriented programs to advance past the level of the common laborer. But even if the student wants no more than to be a skilled laborer, he should be given the skills which will provide him with a path to middle management. This unit provides him with some knowledge of the communication skills demanded in his field.

PERSONALIZED INSTRUCTION FOR THE TECHNICAL STUDENT

Vivienne Hertz, School of Technical Careers
Southern Illinois University-Carbondale

My presentation is intended for those who are new to teaching and for those of us who have been members of the fraternity (sorority?) for some time. As we examine ways to improve our teaching and to look for alternatives to the lecture as a method of instruction, we listen to the voices of the 70's. One such voice is that of K. Patricia Cross who says that the 50's were concerned with academic excellence for the few, the 60's with equal opportunity for all, and the 70's with individualizing instruction for each.[1] Others speak of the "new clientele" and other frontiers that challenge us as we find our campus extended halfway across the United States with intensive scheduling dictating novel and challenging time structures.

Many who speak today of personalizing or individualizing instruction think in terms of cognitive style mapping that considers the student's preference for lecture-discussion, independent study, audio-tutorials, and so on. Closely related would be the organizational psychologists' learning style inventory that offers the student a look at his preference for active experimentation, abstract thinking, and variations thereof. Still others, especially those who teach composition courses, think of individualizing by examining and addressing the problem through "basic skills," and the complementary need to bring each to a level of competency. To do so, students move at their own rate to achieve the same prescribed learning objectives.

While admittedly intrigued with a variety of ways to meet individual needs as an "advocate" of the 70's, I confess my "new directions" are extensions of warmed over old ideas. I have always felt a reasonable way to personalize instruction with the technical student is to work through the medium of his own technical field, that is, to involve members of the technologies if the student is to write a technical report that is really technical, complete with a vocabulary at times esoteric to me.

After more years teaching technical writing than I care to admit, I confess that I do know the difference between a theodolite and the engineer's transit, that mesial and labial are not alien terms, and that I even have a speaking vocabulary that includes LED's, miniaturization, and N-gates. But it is only a vocabulary, perhaps even a pretense, because it's a surface knowledge. And because I hope that my technical students go below the surface in their understanding as well as

their interpretation of the research in their fields, I do try to personalize through enlisting the aid of instructors in the department to help formulate topics for papers, to provide other forms of assistance, and to evaluate the final paper.

This technical advisor relationship is not the theme of my presentation, but it does affect the medium used for the individualizing of instruction. To explain, I might add that a typical class is heterogeneous, some 25-35 students from dental laboratory technology, electronics, automotives, data processing, secretarial and office specialties to name a few. Hopefully, they will be second year students if enrolled in a two-year program; if in a four-year program, they will be in varying stages of their technical preparation.

As these students think in terms of their major research project, they vary in their abilities to select and organize a topic. Some know what they will do before the first day of class. In fact, some few write their papers in anticipation of the course and then modify them as they progress in the course. Others go through the pangs that accompany the creative process as they play around with an idea, and whittle it down to a workable framework. Some of this we do together; other portions are done independently and submitted as a separate piece of writing in the form of a proposal.

There are always some students, more than I like to admit, who have a great deal of difficulty with this initial process. In fact, I would judge that they have more trouble at this stage than they do in the writing of the report. To address this problem and also to individualize a portion of the course, some of us produced a video tape that provided suggestions for the student who might be facing this dilemma. By some of us, I mean two instructors from one of the technical fields--electronics, two second year students, and a designer from SIU's Learning Resources Center. For the rest of my presentation, I invite you to watch the 15-minute tape. After you have viewed it, I would appreciate your taking a few minutes to fill out a brief evaluation of our efforts. Bear in mind that we are a "shoestring" operation, but I invite your criticism to guide us in further such efforts.

AFTERWORD. Participants weren't told about the amount of pre-planning that went into preparation of this tape: two designer-instructor conferences, and three meetings with the total group prior to taping, a minimum of 10-12 hours. Based on the evaluation, further such attempts will:

* Separate the concepts of narrowing a topic and working with an advisor.
* Include more advance organizers.
* Hopefully clean up technical problems.
* For the time being switch to cassette taping.

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[1]K. Patricia Cross, "New Roles for College Teachers, Community College Frontiers (Winter, 1977), 6.

EVALUATION: VTR ON THE REPORTING PROCESS

SUMMARY OF RESPONSES FROM WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

		AGREE	UNDECIDED	DISAGREE
1.	Do you think the VTR accomplished its intended objectives?			
	a. Identifies several reporting methods.	10	9	5
	b. Discusses the range of possibilities for a topic in electronics.	11	7	5
	c. Shows how to narrow a topic.	17	5	1
	d. Points out the type of assistance the technical advisor can provide.	17	5	0
2.	Do you think the student could gain some insight about organizing his own topic?	12	8	1
3.	The intended student group would be second year electronics students. Is the content appropriate for this group?	17	7	2
4.	Would you use this VTR to motivate and/or interest your students when introducing a unit on the reporting process?	5	9	9
5.	Does the VTR depict technical writing as a cooperative effort involving the faculty in the technical field?	19	3	2
6.	What about the quality of production?			
	a. Clear expression of ideas	12	6	5
	b. Understandable transitions from one section to another	12	4	8
	c. Able to hear individual speakers	6	4	14

7. What changes would you suggest to improve the quality of this VTR?

   a. To improve the learning experience: summarize and repeat main points, clarify relationship of objectives to writing, eliminate irrelevant comments.

   b. To make technical improvements: eliminate the chart, control the voice quality and volume, zoom in on speakers, enliven background, improve lighting.

TEACHING PROPOSAL WRITING

Irene B. Hawley
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Southern Illinois University

When I first started teaching proposal writing, I had the mistaken impression that the secret to a successful proposal is a well-written document. Then when I got a chance to look at some successful proposals, proposals that had been funded, I had the shock of my life. Everything that could be wrong was wrong. I had an even greater shock when I saw that some beautifully written proposals were not funded--including one of my own. So it didn't take me long to find out that a proposal, a written document, is really only the final stamp of approval.

In most cases projects are funded through personal contact. First you go and meet with the people that you hope will fund your project. You establish some kind of personal relationship with them and find out what they want. You sell yourself and your project to them. When all the details have been ironed out, then you write your report. And, truthfully, it doesn't really matter all that much what's in the proposal or how it's written. When you work with students on proposal writing, you want to impress on them how important it is first to contact the representatives of the funding source. So rule no. 1 is to get to know the people.

Rule no. 2 is to get to know their language. All bureaucrats have their own jargon, and you had better know it. You need to be able to communicate with them in their language, even with the so-called "boss" words that would not be considered good style by many of you.

Know the priorities, since typically the time between the announcement of the grant and the deadline for submitting the proposal is short. It may be as short as two weeks. You have to have some inside information about the general priorities of the funding source, the grantor, so that you can do some preparation ahead of time.

Now let's suppose that we have touched base with some prospective funding source and know what they want. The next question is whether or not to apply. It's always very tempting, especially for the beginning proposal writer, to think, "Aha! There's a lot of money. Let's get some. Let's write out a project." I would suggest that you warn your students to think twice before submitting a proposal. For one thing, the proposal, if it is funded, is a major commitment. You commit yourself, your time, and the resources of your agency. You may also involve a number of your staff members.

And that brings up another point. If it is a major proposal, it may entail more than only your work. It may also be committing your agency and your staff. In that case, before you start you had better get the people who are going to be involved to pass on the proposal. It can be upsetting to have this commitment sprung upon them if it means additional work in which they may not be interested. It may affect the structure of the organization. Also, you have to think about what happens after the grant runs out? Do you fire all the people that were hired as new staff under the grant? Since you probably don't want to fire them, you have to hunt around for some more money. As I said, since it's a major commitment, you should really think twice about submission of the proposal.

There's one more caution: the time limit. When you submit the proposal, you make the limit as realistic as possible, just as you would do with the tentative budget. But, remember that anything that can go wrong will go wrong. In the end you are always under the pressure of time. But you have to deliver. If you write a proposal, you make a promise that you must keep. If you don't, you'll never, never again get any money. So it's very important that you keep to the time line that you have developed.

I usually spend a session or two telling my students all these gruesome details, and if they are still willing to go ahead after that, then we get to the next step, identifying funding sources. I require my students to come up with a project. When I first started, I just had them develop a proposal, no matter what it was. But that didn't work out too well, because it had no real meaning. Certain steps are difficult to make up. So now I ask all students to get a realistic project to identify something that they want done and for which money is needed. It could be for a club, a church, a school; it doesn't matter what. But it's really important to choose something about which they're excited and anxious to get funded.

The next step takes them to our Research and Projects Office. They have all the directories, federal registers, and other materials needed to find out where the money is and in what the various agencies are interested. Now those of you who come from institutions without such offices will probably find a community development agency in your area. These agencies have directories identifying potential grantors.

We also talk about foundations as resources. They vary in their potential help. Operating foundations operate their own programs and facilities. Since they have their own museum, their own school, they usually don't want to invest money in outsiders and their bright ideas. Instead, you might look to the specialty foundations. The trick is to find a special purpose foundation whose purpose happens to coincide with yours. You may want to change your proposal just a little bit to make it fit in with the objectives of a foundation or an agency that

has money available. You have to be a little flexible. There are also community foundations. Do you know about Chicago Community Trust, one of the largest community foundations involving some 240 companies, that specifically serves Chicago?

Another excellent resource is the corporate foundation or company sponsored foundation. There are about 1800 of these. For example, Sears Roebuck Foundation in Chicago is one. The function of these foundations is public relations, obviously, so they'll fund projects that contribute to the greater glory of the company. One project was able to get some money from Penney's here in Carbondale. It wasn't very much, but enough to get started on a project in which we were interested. At least we were able to get a little seed money.

If a company doesn't have a foundation, you might want to send your students over to the company's vice president or director of public relations or community relations to talk with him or her. Most big firms have some discretionary cash lying around for such non-recurring costs.

In helping your students identify a foundation that would be appropriate for the objectives of the project, have them check the foundation's grant making record. Don't look only at their stated objectives. Look at what they've funded in the past and, above all, look at the size of the typical grant. If you want $1,000 and after looking at the records find that this company or foundation has been funding $50,000 projects, forget about applying to them. They're not in your league and you're not in theirs. So do check the size of the grant and the kinds of projects that they fund. Some very good sources are in their handouts.

I haven't even touched on the writing of the proposal proper. And you must realize that I have been condensing several class sessions into this presentation. For now I will recommend an excellent book for people interested in teaching proposal writing. It is Developing Skills in Proposal Writing by Mary Hall (Oregon State System of High Education, Corvallis, Oregon, 1971). What I like about this book is that it takes the student through the steps one by one and emphasizes the logic of the process. It stresses clarifying your needs so that everything else flows from them. The needs statement determinesthe objectives (to be stated operationally), and procedures follow the objectives. The most important of all is evaluation. Evaluation has to be in agreement with the objectives. It is in this part of the process that our students seem to have a lot of trouble. It seems really difficult for them to think in these terms.

COMBATTING THE NOMINAL STYLE

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As I chose this phrase, "nominal style," I am suggesting not to use nouns as adjectives unless you have to. What is the nominal style? Most of us have some idea that it consists of eliminating a higher proportion of nouns in our writing as done by writers that we consider good stylists. These nouns tend to be long ones, abstract ones, and ones that are obviously derived from some other language. Now those three qualities don't produce more nouns, but they do make these styles appear more dominated by nouns.

This excess is created frequently by using nouns in place of verbs, by using adjectives in place of verbs. Such adjectives sound like verbs, like destructive or indicative of something. These words make the writing sound like the nominal style. Too much use of the passive voice and such verbs as "is," "have," and "may" creates sentences in which nouns dominate. This style is characteristic of many professions and academic disciplines; it's also the by-product of any bureaucracy.

On the other hand, it doesn't seem as though these problems are common among high school students and college freshmen. At least I haven't encountered a great deal of it with them. In fact, they come to us with a certain innocence in their writing problems.

The nominal style, though, comes easily to experienced writers, requiring practice as does any other "craft." It's something one must aspire to--work at. You have to faithfully imitate certain models. So it more frequently becomes the "attainment" of say juniors and seniors. Graduate students, business people, social workers, government officials, and alas college teachers practice the craft. The student learns this style from leaders in the fields that he reads and listens to. He "catches it" from teachers, public figures, and others who write the published material in whatever field he is in.

Strings of nouns, generally nouns used as adjectives, are what you have to exclude. The passage that follows as an example appeared in the Journal of Technical Writing and Communication 4 (Spring, 1974), 147-62. I thought just the fact that it appeared there might say something. I believe you will agree that the overall impression is writing with nouns. The extremities of prepositional phrases in part result from some other problems. If you have a weak verb and if the main elements of the sentence don't say very much, you've got to say it some other way. The

tendency is to make your statement with a prepositional phrase. In this passage, all the difficulties aren't with such phrases, but there is a number of them. And they always require a noun as a subject.

"The well conceived program of continuing education makes the learning process the actual focus of organizational efforts. It is designed to serve the needs and purposes of individual staff members. Also it takes advantage of the particular characteristics of the sociocultural situation in which the resource system operates. Four major areas of concern are evident in this development:

* Creation of a felt obligation on the part of professionals and supervisors to undertake a planned and well designed inservice or continuing education program.

* Development of a set of guidelines for the media, library, and information system which will implement an appropriate and superior inservice program.

* Recognition by community and professional leaders that the rapid expansion of knowledge in the communications and resource infrastructure field will require fulltime study and necessitate resolution of issues of staffing and finances.

* Professional schools, associations, and other educational institutions need to plan programs especially for individuals who will continue their education on a part-time as well as full-time and often nondegree basis."

What is missing here is that in reading the whole article or the whole passage one isn't aware of who is supposed to do what. Who is to create the obligations or develop the guidelines? It's as though the writer hadn't really thought about it and perhaps thinks all will fall into place . When he writes the nouns, he forgets that someone is going to have to do it. So I have taken the liberty of putting someone there. My revision follows:

A good program of continuing education focuses on learning itself and meets the needs of people on the {library} staff. It also takes advantage of the particular characteristics of a library's surroundings. Those who want to see a good continuing education program established need to do four things:

* Make professors and supervisors feel obligated to design a worthwhile program.

* Draw up guidelines for an inservice program.

* Make community and professional leaders recognize that new findings in communications and library research will call for full-time study by some staff members. And that study will create problems in staffing and finances.

* Urge schools and associations to plan programs for full- and part-time degree students as well as for nondegree students.

Examples of the Nominal Style:

1. Strings of Nouns. An agency-community encounter simulation has been developed to provide an experience in communications for students and practitioners in media, library, and information science.

2. Verbs Turned into Nouns or Adjectives. The mayor's reduction of the budget for city improvement projects in Zenith is indicative of an attitude in government officials that is destructive of such progress as has been made towards the renewal of our urban environment.

3. Strings of Prepositional Phrases. An internship as a component in professional education is a period of service as a regular staff member for a social agency under conditions that provide opportunities to observe and experience the relationships among procedures, policies, and purposes.

4. Simple Sentence Structure. The range of responsibility in communicative services includes individual patrons, groups, and organizations as well as the community.

If we see this problem of the nominal style in students' work, we can say not to overuse nouns as adjectives, to supply a doer of an action when the context seems to call for one, and not to work to avoid saying who has done something. We can encourage students to use more dependent clauses and thereby increase the density of verbs in their writing, active voice, and graphic rather than inert verbs like "is." Then as teachers we can exert whatever influence we have to reduce the presence of this style in whatever writing we control--memoranda sent out by our departments, textbooks we choose, and above all the writing we do.

WRITING OPPORTUNITIES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Jewell Friend, Associate Dean
College of Liberal Arts

Recently one of my rewarding professional experiences has involved setting up internships for students in the College of Liberal Arts. For example, students who are math majors have opportunities to do research for insurance companies or do internships for credit by working with investment brokers. We have geography majors in Liberal Arts working in urban planning programs and with our Greater Egypt Development Council. English majors have opportunities to undertake internships in publishing houses.

To function effectively in the publishing area, our students have a special program that we set up here at SIU to provide training, for credit, in book design and production, copy editing, and even advertising books. All of these activities lead us to recognize the special kinds of writing skills that students need. Unfortunately they don't become eligible for these internships until very much of their undergraduate work is finished. So we find ourselves frequently meeting at night to teach special kinds of writing skills to some of these students who are to participate in the internships.

I contend that writing skills and course outlines vary with the student populations and their major fields. A course outline for Administration of Justice students, particularly those who are going into corrections and law enforcement programs of various kinds, reflects the vastly different writing skills that they need. To determine the skills, we went to various agencies to accumulate forms, citations, and a number of legal documents that these students would be expected to use. That brought me to the point to look at some of the careers for which our students are preparing. I focused on dental hygienists and dental technologists for this presentation.

As most of you know, when we prepare people, particularly in technological programs, we give them the skills that are going to give our program accreditation and enable them to pass certain examinations to be admitted into the field. But it also occurred to me that no place in our programs are we providing information on the general milieu in which these students are going to have to operate. Such students, and I'm using the hygienist and technologist simply because I am interested in them, but any of this discussion might apply to any of the careers, begin their careers assuming that they will

be involved with no more than prophylaxis, prothesis, x-rays, or other such fragmented contacts with the real world. Thus they are limited, not only in their own opportunities, but also in being ill-prepared to deal with kinds of business world experiences. So I'm suggesting that if no place else but in the technical writing programs, we offer opportunities to see, through an examination of documents that they're going to be dealing with, some of the possibilities for enhancing their careers and preparing them for new kinds of business contacts.

First of all, I started to look at what the ancillary training should provide. In the case of either the dental technologist or dental hygienist, some familiarity with either accounting or bookkeeping is appropriate. I don't mean to suggest that they may be taking over the books, but that they should be better prepared to understand what the records mean. I am not suggesting that they become "Janes-of-all-Trades" or "Jacks-of-all-Trades." But they ought to be familiar with the professional world of dentistry. That involves bookkeeping, fee setting, credit and collection policies, methods of discussing fees, extending credit, and making collections.

They should have some familiarity with collection by a lawsuit, the writing of collection letters, and dealing with credit reference bureaus. What are the necessary forms? What are the limitations on information to be given over the telephone? What might be involved with malpractice and how does one deal with it? Most of my student hygienists could not tell me, for example, why they couldn't set up their own clinics in public school systems. They didn't know what a written contract looked like. They didn't know anything about the implications of the estate of a deceased patient or a bankrupt patient.

As we take these 18 to 20 year olds and put them through technological programs, we need to prepare them for experiences that will familiarize them with the real world of the dental profession. They know very little about tax allowances. They know little about making various kinds of checklists. They are uninformed about taxable income. Many of them have never filed an income tax form; in fact, few have even looked at one. They have very little opportunity to see codes of ethics that are a part of the professional area. They have no idea of the varying legal responsibilities of the dentist, the dental technologist, or the dental hygienist. I suggest that an opportunity to look at these kinds of documents is very well a part of the special technical writing programs that we offer.

Do they know about the role of the expert witness, an important part of any dentist's function. How does the dental technologist or the dental hygienist function as an expert witness? Many of them, incidentally, get involved in these things. What are the do's and don'ts of the witness? How

does the expert witness function with a lawyer? What are the ethical aspects of testifying? Our police department down here, for example, frequently calls on Dr. Eleanor Bushee of the School of Technical Careers, who is a dentist, to examine dental records and impressions of bodies that haven't been identified. It was she who called my attention to the fact that a hygienist or a technologist may very well be called upon to function in this way and has absolutely no idea what it entails.

Let me mention other things on this list. What's involved in establishing a restrictive covenance, for example in the sale of a dentist's practice? What are the implications for the dental technologist and for the dental hygienist in such cases? What are the employment agreements that they're going to be called upon to sign? What are the restraint of trade and public interest concerns that they as professionals will have in dealing with human beings? What are the areas of judicial enforcement? What are the statutes that make these restrictive covenants unenforceable? What is the function of the auxiliary personnel who may be brought in for a special kind of service? What are the restraints on employment and the economics of using auxiliary personnel?

Other concerns would be: What does a real estate lease for a dentist's office look like? What does a purchase agreement for dental equipment or dental facilities involve? What are some of the constraints for agencies to discuss when you're trying to get information on group practices facilities or on construction of a dental facility? What do the purchase and sale agreement look like? What are some of the necessary checklists?

How do you go about dealing with an insurance broker on dental operations with insurance as it relates to malpractice accidents to your health, medical, or surgical hospitalization and to workmen's compensation? All of these become part of the professional milieu in which these hypienists and technologists will operate. And they seldom have an opportunity to see the forms, to read the technical language, and become familiar with the resources. From this model, you may want to think about other technical fields for which you are training students.

THE TECHNICAL ADVISOR FOR STUDENT RESEARCH REPORTS

Paul Harre, Supervisor
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The role of technical advisor is an important ingredient in the recipe for a technical research report. Whenever you bake a cake you follow a step-by-step procedure to insure success; a technical report also requires a step-by-step procedure for it to be successful.

The procedure that I use as a technical advisor is:

1. Fix in your student's mind what he/she needs to accomplish to satisfy your requirements.

2. The student must determine what he/she will sacrifice to satisfy your requirements.

3. Establish the dates for completion.

4. Set up a plan of attack and begin immediately.

5. The student should write in clear, concise statements what is expected of him/her.

To use the above procedure I must know the student as an individual, rather than just a number. I must be aware of his/her interests, willingness to work, and the things that give him/her personal satisfaction. By becoming personally involved with the student, I can help him/her understand that I am willing to help rather than just make busy work.

We will discuss several topics allowing the student to choose a topic in which he/she can become interested and involved. This method also provides the student a means of seeing that a topic needs to be a well-calculated decision. This decision, in turn, can help him/her in the preparation of the proposal.

At our next meeting the student will have his/her proposal ready to be evaluated. The proposal, I feel, is a very important, if not the most important, part of a successful technical report. I must spend a little extra time showing him/her the good parts of the proposal. I always point out the good parts first, because the student has worked very hard and this attention will reward him/her mentally. Then I move on to show how improvements can be made by the deletion or addition of certain items.

With the restrictions which I have set forth the student is ready to rewrite the proposal into its final form. The rewritten proposal will cover the topic completely, since I feel that a successful technical report must cover the topic completely. A lengthy report does not always constitute a successful report; therefore, restriction of the topic usually improves the final product.

After the proposal has been revised, the student and I formulate a plan of attack. In this plan we discuss the dates for all steps to be completed. With all dates clearly defined, the student and I can begin preparing an outline. When I mention the student and I, I am referring to my obligation of reviewing, adding, or deleting.

The writing of the report is to be completed section by section. I require the student to bring in each section as it is completed for evaluation and revision. The student must be made aware that the revisions are being made to improve the report, rather revision only for revision's sake. I have found it is much easier and less time consuming for the student if he/she is made aware of small errors which can be corrected easily at the beginning of the report. If the small errors are not corrected early, they will only magnify throughout the remainder of the report. The larger the errors, the more difficult they are to correct.

The final report is the produce of all the revisions suggested throughout the writing. The most rewarding experience is reading a report that a student, under my guidance, has completed. I can see that my guidance has helped the student complete a report that will help in the future time for employment.

In my opinion, students should not be enrolled in a technical writing course until later in their studies. I prefer to enroll my students in the last semester of their final year. My reasons for this are:

1. The student will have a technical background on which to base a paper.

2. The student is more mature and will develop a better report.

3. The student can use this paper as evidence, when he/she looks for employment, of the caliber and capability of his/her work.

The technical advisor's role is an enjoyable one; however, the advisor must be willing to spend additional time with these reports. And I feel that it is very important for the technical writing instructor to have a meeting or talk to every advisor about the role of the advisor.

Q: Since you suggest postponing technical writing until the end of the two-year course, what is your opinion about students' being able to write some papers other than the technical report?

A: I'm not suggesting they put off the basic composition course. That is one of the first courses they should take. For a true technical writing report, they need technical competency. In our program we have freshmen and sophomores who are at the junior college level. They take five hours of English: three in composition and two in technical writing.

Our advisory committee that works with our program tells us that the students who can write will become more than electronics technicians. They are the ones that will get ahead. If you can go back and talk to your electronics faculty and show them that their students will advance, your position is stronger. The best public relations for an electronics program is the progress of the graduates. If they are succeeding, the program will move ahead.

Q: Can you say something about the number of students that you're willing to work with?

A: I can handle 20 students a semester. I spend between three and four hours with each student, sometimes in the laboratory.

Q: What weight does the technical report have on the total grade?

A: I go by points; the report is worth 200 points from a usual total of 900 to 1000 points.

Q: Can you talk about the need for cooperation between the technical writing instructor and the technical faculty?

A: The best way is to see what Vivienne and I are doing. You need a close working relationship. I like to know due dates so that I can see the reports a week before they are due in to her.

Q: Are your grades similar? I had an unfortunate experience with a discrepancy between the advisor's grade and my own--a discrepancy between a F and an A.

A: We keep the grading separate between the technical writing course and the electronics course, although the major report is evaluated in both classes. I mentioned the 1/5 weight of the laboratory class. The technical writing instructor assigns the grade in the writing class with a recommendation from the advisor, primarily directed to the technical accuracy of the report.

THE CHALLENGE OF THE JOB APPLICATION LETTER

E. Michael Walsh, Coordinator
Baccalaureate Studies, School of Technical Careers
Southern Illinois University

The job application letter is a specialized form of communication. It usually finds its place in courses such as business writing, technical writing, and report writing, as well as in courses about job-hunting. If the writing students do in college should mirror the kinds of writing they are likely to do once they leave school, then the art of the job application letter should be in every composition curriculum.

First, the letter of application is an almost archetypal example of the questions faced by any communicator, "Does the message receive its intended response?" The letter of application is a form of written communication that has, we must admit, a high likelihood of failure. This recognition is, I think, an important one for teachers and students, for it exemplifies the unpredictability which often characterizes communication.

Second, there is amazingly little agreement about the form the letter should take in order to achieve its goal. We have two almost diametrically opposed types of job application letters:

(1) The letter as formality, similar to a handshake, noticeable only by its absence; in this tradition the application letter is generally a mere cover letter for a resume.

(2) The letter as substantive: usually substantive letters have a purpose of their own, gaining the interest of the reader and presenting in summary form a case for interviewing the writer.

No one has, to my knowledge, examined the effectiveness of the two approaches to determine whether the letter as formality or the letter as substantive is superior. And yet such an examination is warranted, for when we teach, we teach not only what we think is good, but also what we think will be successful, all else being equal.

I think that the job application letter is not only a worthy subject, but also that it deserves a better treatment than the routine one usually given. In most textbooks the treatment of letters of application has two characteristics:

(1) Lessons in format.

(2) Emphasis on the obvious.

One is told, for example, the number of paragraphs in a letter of application and the kind of information that should be given in each. In almost every case the example emphasize the obvious: "I am a computer operator and you want a computer operator: or "You have an opening for an engineer and I have a degree in engineering." This approach makes the job application letter just another form letter, a mere step above the cover letter. It seems that the letter is really not seen as a variable which can be manipulated and that it can have an effect.

The job application letter should not be taught as a fill-in-the blanks exercise, but as an activity that involves both the art of managing tone and the continual exercise of one's analytic skills. A well-written letter of application involves three processes:

(1) Self-analysis: In particular, the ability to perceive one's transferable skills.

(2) Job analysis: The examination of a potential job for its component parts and the skills necessary for or helpful to successful performance.

(3) Self-marketing: The creative matching of one's self and skills to the requirements of the job.

There are practical reasons for a new approach to teaching letters of application. The major one is that the conventional way of looking at letters of application proves valid for only a small percentage of persons. It frequently happens that college graduates apply for jobs for which they are not ideally suited by education and background. A sociology major may apply for a job in community health, or a history major may decide on a career in sales. Even a graduate who has the educational background which a job requires is competing with a number (and sometimes quite a large number) of persons who have similar backgrounds. The job application letter, then, involves more than matching a square peg with a square hole, for many square pegs may be seeking that one square hole, or the hole may not be all that square to begin with.

The purpose of this discussion is not simply to argue for a new approach to teaching letters of application. Rather, it is to provide some exercises which can be used in teaching letters of application. Certainly the following class outline can be modified, but the general goals of the sequence should remain: not only to explain conventional formats for letters of application, but also to emphasize ways of developing content.

Class No. 1. The first class can deal with letter formats, letter-writing conventions, and resumes. The teacher should convey the importance of detail and emphasize the extent to which detail can improve even a conventional letter. The assignment

might be to "Write a letter of application for the kind of job you would like and expect to be qualified for when you graduate from college. Include a resume."

Class No. 2. Class 2 introduces the idea that job application letters should take into account the reality that many people face and that most textbooks ignore--that people apply for jobs which are not closely matched to their education or experience, that even those applying for jobs for which they are seemingly qualified are competing with many others who are equally qualified. Students, therefore, need to learn to make explicit connections between job requirements and their experience, knowledge, and abilities. First, students should be encouraged to look at their education as only one aspect of themselves. They have a wealth of other experiences relevant to many jobs. The teacher can use the following example of a person who wishes to be involved in historical research:

Experience	Competency
I have done several in-depth studies of historic landmarks such as Valley Forge, Fort Sumter, Alexandria, and others.	Historic preservation
I have written news stories and editorials for the campus newspaper and other publications.	Journalism/writing
I have analyzed the statistical data resulting from survey questionnaires.	Data analysis
I planned a meeting of professional historians at Carlisle, 1974.	Conference planning

(Adapted from materials developed by Dr. Howard Figler of Dickinson College, Carlisle, PA)

Second, the teacher can have the class analyze various majors or experiences for relevancy to potential jobs. For example how does the summer job of waitress prepare a person for the job of managing a customer complaint department in a large department store? On the surface the two experiences seem to have little in common, but the question should elicit comments on discretion, handling stress, and customer service.

As an assignment the instructor can give a sample letter or paragraph for revision, encouraging changes that will make more specific the relationship between the information which the applicant gives about himself or herself and the real or implied requirements of the job.

Class No. 3. The class can be divided into groups to discuss their revisions. The final assignment requires that students write a letter of application drawing only on experiences they have actually had. They are thus forced to be creative, realistic, and analytic in developing the content of an individualized letter.

TECHNICAL WRITING AS A GENERAL STUDIES OPTION

Roy Weshinskey, Director of Composition
Department of English, Southern Illinois University

If as I speak you think you've heard these words or at least the ideas before, you're okay, because you have. But give an English teacher an audience of one, say "Composition," and that person will speak on ad infinitum, and sometimes ad absurdem. Let me begin with some past history, part of which may be fiction because I'm somewhat of an anomaly. I came to freshman composition at an age when most people are saying, "Let me out. I've had enough." Last December the chairman of our English Department asked me to become director of composition programs. Bear in mind that, although I've taught writing courses through the years, I have not taught a freshman composition course for at least ten years. You may ask, "Why did he ask you to take this important role?" I ask the same question, but go a step further, "Why did I agree to do it?" Directing a large composition program is a young man's game, but here I am--doing it.

But back to history. Late in 1973 the president of Southern Illinois University at Carbondale announced that we would change the academic year from three quarters to two semesters. The guidelines for the conversion did not come to the faculty until March of 1974. You can imagine the mad scramble that resulted. After the inevitable bitching about the lack of time, the enormity of the job, and the impossibility of the task, we went to work. One of the guidelines was that there would be a five hour composition requirement for all students. The first semester posed no serious problem since we could expand the first quarter course to take care of the first semester course. But what about the second semester?

Another guideline was to be creative and imaginative in the new courses. It was not enough to change a three quarter hour course into a three semester hour course. Also, by 1974 there was a good sized group of people who clamored to be heard. They were the people who not only saw a need, but were trying to fill it. They had made sufficient noise and had been so persuasive in their conviction that their stripped down van was rapidly becoming a customized pad on wheels. Of course, I refer to the technical writing teachers who refuse to be apologetic any longer for their important work. So it was decided to give the students a choice of two courses to fulfill the composition requirements in the second semester: continued work in traditional expository writing or technical writing. The inevitable cry went up, "What are you trying to do, turn our department into a vocational school? That course belongs

out at VTI (now the School of Technical Careers), not in a department devoted to humane studies.

Technical writing became a second semester option along with creative writing. It was presumed that expository writing would be the course that most students would elect. Creative writing would be the second most popular, and technical writing would run a poor third. With that in mind, the department scheduled six sections of technical writing that attracted 135 students in the fall of 1974. In the spring of 1975 there were 22 sections with 476 students. This fall we are running 15 trailer sections of technical writing with 341 students, an increase of 153% in four years. Next semester we'll have 40 sections of expository writing, 40 sections of technical writing, and 20 sections of creative writing. So you can see that technical writing, which was put into the curriculum somewhat grudgingly, has become an important part of the mission of the Department of English.

Several academic units such as the College of Science, the College of Business Administration, School of Agriculture, Home Economics Department, School of Technical Careers, and so on, require our technical writing course at the freshman level. It's here to stay. It's an important course. It's an important part of the Department of English. That's why I brought to this workshop four teaching assistants who will help take back the message to all the other teaching assistants and faculty members. How can they fail to see the importance and catch the enthusiasm when we have spent the hours in the presence of Don Cunningham, Vivienne Hertz, and others who believe in their discipline and who have been unflagging in their enthusiasm in the face of rebuttals.

Once young teachers and experienced ones have taught technical writing a few times they realize that it's really not so different from teaching a traditional expository writing course. The basic premise is the same. Someone has something to say to someone else. Isn't it incumbent upon the writer to be as clear and direct and precise as he can be so that the reader can pick up the message and do with it what he wants and what he needs to do? The writing may look different on the page. The language may be new. The purpose may not be familiar. But the means by which the message is sent is as old as the written and spoken word. Definition, classification, analysis, synthesis, comparison/contrast, cause and effect. Technical writing requires a thesis, an apparent and logical organization, supporting details and data, precise language, concreteness, and a conclusion. In addition, instructors have the personal reward of worrying about things that they may never have encountered, and have a chance to know people with interests mostly different from their own.

Should technical writing be an option in a General Studies program? I thought I'd never ask. The answer is an unequivocal YES. Particularly in a natural sequence to the basic writing

course. Particularly in today's world where the writing has become particularized, if not specialized.

Q: We at the College of Lake County have had articulation problems in transferring credits from technical writing courses to SIU and other colleges.

A: I can't tell you why other than to ask if, in your course description, you stress oral communication. The people at SIU who make the equations do so based on guidelines set down by the General Studies Council. The actual equation is made in the Records Division of the Registrar's Office. A few people have written to me about this, and I've been able to help. The Registrar's Office is perfectly willing to do this because they are not the ones to make the judgment. I don't understand why a technical writing course described in the traditional catalog fashion should not be transferable.

Another problem exists in transferring work. Many junior colleges have two tracks with two sets of courses: one for associate degree students and the other for college preparatory. English courses for those students who declare themselves as terminal may differ from other English courses.

Q: Could you define what you mean by the mission of the Department of English?

A: The mission has been imposed on us, rather than our going out and seeking it. As a redefinition, what we now have to do is understand and accept the mission. By we I mean English Departments. The students are here. The students demand.

But I don't think that demand is the only reason for offering technical writing courses. They are one part of the whole survey of what English Departments must do: teach people how to write, to read, to speak, to think creatively, imaginatively, to be humane--all of these things that we do. We teach a lot through our personality. Because, after all, what is teaching finally, but a body of knowledge refracted through an individual, through a person, through a personality? And so we can't scorn technical writing. It is very much a part of what English Departments have always done. The word or term "technical" or "practical" tends to be too narrowly defined. In freshman 101, what do we do when we teach writing skills? That's technical, too, isn't it? If you're teaching writing skills, you can't escape being technical.

TEACHING TECHNICAL WRITING THROUGH THE TUTORIAL METHOD

Paul H. Morrill, Department of Higher Education
Southern Illinois University

Although the teaching process I am going to discuss was earlier called "indepedent study," what I use is more of a tutorial method. You'll be interested in how I arrived at this condition. When you are a professional writer you see that bringing people into a classroom and talking to them about writing, or getting them to read about writing, or all the conglomerate things that go on in a classroom of twenty or thirty students are simply "second level." This is a way of giving them ideas of what to do. It's not the way to learn how to write.

The plain fact is that writing is learned by the writing. The more you can get people to write, the quicker you can get people to write, and the more emphasis you can pull from writing. That's the way to get things done.

I'll give you just a bare background so you'll understand what I'm talking about. When I was in college I was a stringer for the Cleveland Plain Dealer. No one told me how to do anything, I just had to find out the hard way. If it didn't go, I tried something else. When I went to Columbia University to graduate school, I worked for a time at Time-Life, but all I learned there was how Time-Life was put together. The point is, if you're in the professional game and you need to know how to write, you don't do it by coming to a classroom and sitting around talking about it. That's my professional opinion! Over the years I've developed a feeling that the less time I spend with large bodies of students to talk about something the better off the student will be if he meets with me individually, works independently, does his writing, and gets the criticism that he needs as he goes along.

So I have several statements that I'm going to make. The first one is that you learn how to write by writing. The second is that I think writing is a developmental practice and it goes on several plateaus. You've been hinting at this in your discussions. It seems to me, of course, that the primary thing you have to do is get the plateau of knowing how to spell and put things in general order. But there is a development that goes beyond that in which you begin to use your mind at other levels. When you talk to a class of twenty to thirty students there is bound to be many at different levels of their development. You're wasting your time to go after a small grammatical point for all people. You can do it better if you meet with them individually.

I think sitting down with somebody face to face for ten minutes is much better than 50 minutes in a classroom with thirty people. Half of them may not have that problem, are not interested in that problem, or don't develop along those lines at all. Writing is a developmental skill. It requires practice. And the best way to practice is to sit down, as Sinclair Lewis said, and do it. He came to the University of Wisconsin to teach a writing course. He walked in and asked, "How many of you want to learn how to write?" Everybody raised his hand. Then he said, "What the hell are you doing here? Go out and do it." And he never came back to the class. They came to him.

Writing is the general application of the seat of your pants in front of the typewriter. That is what I try to instill in this tutorial method. I meet with the people individually and go at it. I have never had much success in teaching writing by talking.

The third thing is this: I'm not at all sure that, although I've been through lots of editing processes, for a teacher to mark up my paper and hand it back to me and say "Here it is," is the way to get that student to understand what his problem was. He's got to find that out for himself. The best process in the tutorial method is to try and get the student to see where he or she is, what he or she is doing, and work on an individual basis with the individual problem. Everybody's got a different problem. I don't see how you can teach in a direct sense how to be specific or selective unless a person is involved and asks a question. The question you've got to get him or her to ask is "What am I trying to say to whom?" If the student can ask that question and select a path that he wants to cross--that's the thing. You can't teach that. He's got to sit down and do it and do it and do it.

The final statement that I want to make is writing is <u>not</u> the first draft. <u>It is the rewriting</u>. That's the most important thing. I get them to rewrite and I get them to put it away in a drawer. I tell them when they come back to it in two weeks they'll be surprised at what they see and how they'll fix it. Now journalists don't have that luxury, the two weeks. But in teaching technical writing it seems to me you have a perfectly logical right to ask the person to put the writing away and look at it again. These are the things that I do. And it's face to face, <u>vis-a-vis</u>. In the end I am simply someone who guides, off whom students can bounce ideas. In the end they're going to educate me. If they can do that, I feel that I'm successful.

Q: How many students can you handle this way?

A: I've done this two ways: within a classroom structure and by the tutorial method I've just described. At Pennsylvania State University, a long time ago, I was with the English Department but assigned to teach writing skills to the students in the forestry department. I did, as some of you described your teaching, go to the professors in the forestry department and enlisted their aid. I promised to give the students' reports a thorough going over, but wanted them to judge the content. We met in a class, but had workshops in the class.

In the long run the teaching has been a personal thing. When I went to the Dental School at Northwestern University, it was all personal--tutorial. Each of some fifty students were involved in writing case studies, historical surveys, reports on the dental technologies. Whatever the subject, we encouraged them to get the writing to the publishing stage.

More recently the course I developed here at SIU was technical expository writing, an upper division course. Many who enrolled were master's degree students in geology, agriculture, theatre--from all over the university. It would have been difficult to handle such diverse interests in a single class. Each of those sections has ten to fifteen students, all taught by the tutorial method.

Q: What is the maximum you've had in any semester?

A: About twenty-eight. You'd be surprised how easily you can manage. You can schedule someone for five minutes and get more done than in any of the large classes. It really works.

Q: Do you think it would work with larger groups of students?

A: Did you ever try peer teaching? Other people can teach other people. We had three or four workshops going at the same time. We don't talk that much. We simply work.

Q: What is the rest of the class doing?

A: Writing. And they don't need to come to class. They can go to the library to do research--whatever they want. But I don't minimize their responsibilities. They have a schedule. I start, as Mike Walsh suggested, "Write a vita, introduce yourself to me." They have assignments to complete.

COURSES FOR SPECIAL POPULATIONS

Don Bush, Technical Editor
McDonnell Aircraft Company, St. Louis

We can look at special writing courses as we examine the students that are being taught. I've taught courses for people in the Department of Agriculture, people who are secret agents for the government. A few things that I have them do is to rewrite bad sentences, not once but three times, to put across that there's more than one good way of expressing an idea. The exercise also gives them some practice in writing as well as develops fluency.

What I'm saying is that I'm actually trying to teach expository writing. The terminology changes and the jargon changes, but the techniques and the outline of the course are similar.

Another thing that I have fun with is to ask people to look up word origins from their fields. Tracing entomology, I tell them, is one of the things that they might be doing if they had chosen a career in English. Some of the origins of terms in engineering are excellent. Others might be ancillary, campus, curriculum, sensor, and, of course, symposium. I urge you to look up the origin of symposium, the derivation of words like "gantry." In a different technology you can use words like council, sybil, or the difference between compliment and complement, the difference between stationary and stationery. Knowing that one comes from the stationer who was at the station helps in spelling.

Another group that I sometimes talk to are nontechnical people. The approach is completely different. I have to sometimes tell people, non-engineers, what technical writing is. I have to explain to them what a proposal is. What are specifications? With this presentation I have to throw away my whole course outline and start fresh, dig up new material. This is what some of you are doing. Some of our technical writing literature can help in searching for these shifting directions. Can't you see how different this course would be from a course explaining freshman English to engineers. You could start with paragraphs. Then try to take someone who knows what a paragraph is and explain to him what a specification, proposal, or abstract is. It's difficult.

That's not really what I wanted to talk about though. I would like to spend a few minutes brainstorming with you about one of the problems we have in industry. I am talking of

young engineers from two year programs who are trying to get ahead. Sometimes in industry we get a "Henry." Now Henry is basically intelligent, but he actually writes in a conversational style. He writes in partial sentences and often leaves out information. He leaves out steps in the process. He lists random sets of data and makes his statements in afterthoughts. At times his coherence is nonexistent.

We are getting some people like this. Some of them are black, some are from the hills, some are foreign nationals. One boy sits next to me, a bright kid who has trouble with English. He comes from Hong Kong. We have problems in communicating in writing with standard English. Do you have such problems in the schools?

Comment No. 1.

The English we think of as standard is really a second language to these people. Really skillful linguists can make a distinct contribution in this area.

Comment No. 2.

The people in our university who try to help (we have two) are so overburdened that such remedial work can't begin to provide the needed help.

Comment No. 3.

I would rather have some of the top people in the country come and talk to us. English departments need to face up to such problems. Not all remedial work is really remedial. We need to get the help of specialists with learning theory.

Comment No. 4.

Many of these people are very bright. It is a matter of sitting down with them, diagramming some sentences and explaining some basics of standard English. In many cases, you reach the "I see" stage in a short time.

Comment No. 5.

We have a manpower agency for which we provide a short course in business communications for selected students. The first thing that I do is find out what I think the problem is. We use a diagnostic method. Then I sit down with the student prior to contracting what will be done in the course to meet both management's goals and his own. Then I come back with a designed short course that couples the objectives of both the administration and the student (and they aren't always the same). We think of work in a structured human relations environment.

PUBLICATION OPPORTUNITIES FOR TEACHERS OF TECHNICAL WRITING

Donald H. Cunningham
Division of Languages and Literature
Morehead State University

Teachers of technical writing probably have more opportunities to publish and more outlets for their writing than their literary and composition colleagues. Although several major project deadlines have just passed, there are two other imminent opportunities.

The Association of Teachers of Technical Writing plans to publish collections of material devoted to a single topic. These collections will appear either as special issues of The Technical Writing Teacher or as volumes in a series of short anthologies yet untitled. The deadlines for three of these collections have passed, but manuscripts are still being solicited for two others.

A collection devoted to establishing a technical writing course or program will be edited by John S. Harris of Brigham Young University. If you have established a technical writing course or series of technical writing courses at your school and would like to submit a manuscript on the topic, submit it by January 1, 1978, to John S. Harris, English Department, A-246 JKB, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602.

Six nationally circulated periodicals publish material on technical writing and related matters.

* ABCA Bulletin--published quarterly by the American Business Communication Association, 317-B David Kinley Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801. Editor: George H. Douglas.

* IEEE Transactions on Professional Communication--published by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Inc., 345 East 47th Street, New York, NY 10017.

* Journal of Business Communication--published quarterly by the American Business Communication Association, 317-B David Kinley Hall, University of Illinois, Urbana, IL 61801. Editor: George H. Douglas.

* Journal of Technical Writing and Communication--published quarterly by Baywood Publishing Company, 43 Central Drive, Farmingdale, NY 11735. Editor: Jay Gould, Department of English, Literature, and Communication, Rennsselaer Polytechnic Institute, Troy, NY 12181.

* Technical Communication--published quarterly by the Society for Technical Communication, 1010 Vermont Avenue, NW, Washington, DC 20005. Editor: Frank R. Smith, McDonnell Douglas Corp., St. Louis, MO 63166.

* The Technical Writing Teacher--published three times a year by the Association of Teachers of Technical Writing. Editor: Donald H. Cunningham, UPO 685, Morehead State University, Morehead, KY 40341.

For teachers in two-year schools, Teaching English in the Two-Year College provides an excellent publishing outlet. Published out of East Carolina University, its editor is W. Keats Sparrow, Department of English, East Carolina University, Greenville, NC 27834.

Articles on teaching technical writing also appear frequently in Engineering Education, Journal of Chemical Education, College Composition and Communication, and the various regional and state English journals and bulletins. Articles on technical and business writing appear in over one hundred other periodicals, e.g., Industrial Design, S.A.M. Advanced Management Journal, Modern Office Procedures, Instrument and Control Systems, Civil Engineering, Machine Design, Industrial Education, Industrial Photography, The Office, Industrial Supervisor, Supervisory Management, and CHEM TECH.

In addition to these periodicals, several conferences publish proceedings.

* IEEE Proceedings--published by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers, Group on Professional Communication.

* Annual Proceedings--Institute in Technical and Industrial Communication, Colorado State University, Fort Collins, CO 80521.

* Proceedings--International Technical Communication Conference, Society for Technical Communication.

* Papers on Research and Education in Professional Communication--Seminar on Teaching Technical and Professional Writing, University of Michigan, College of Engineering, Department of Humanities, Ann Arbor, MI 48109.

Finally, there is always room for more good textbooks. I do not know of a major publishing house that is not willing to study a proposal/prospectus for a technical writing text.

TWO-YEAR POST-SECONDARY INSTRUCTORS AS NON-TRADITIONAL LEARNERS: TEACHING FACULTY MEMBERS HOW TO PUBLISH

Alice Philbin, Managing Editor
Journal of Studies in Technical Careers

My discussion addresses two topics: the creation and purpose of the Journal of Studies in Technical Careers, and the effort our office is making to teach the School of Technical Careers' faculty to write for publication. Often the technical writing teacher can serve his or her colleagues and institution importantly by acting as a publications resource person.

1. The Journal of Studies in Technical Careers. JSTC will be a publication of research, theoretical, philosophical, and practical articles treating technical, vocational, and occupational training in both higher education and industry. This broad concern, and the journal's scholarly approach, allows JSTC to make distinctive contributions to literature in the areas of technical, occupational, and vocational education. JSTC will encourage vocational education researchers to publish the hard evidence of their studies and it will print manuscripts treating the philosophy, policy concerns, and significant issues of contemporary technical education. A refereed, quarterly publication that will appear in Fall, 1978, JSTC will carry 1,000 to 3,000 word articles that treat the research, philosophy, issues and legislation pertinent to technical educators.

Working on JSTC has made me aware of a serious problem confronting technical eductors--the need for well-written articles which publicize exemplary programs. Although we all subscribe to professional journals relevant to our specific fields, we have often seen excellent, unique programs developed at our institutions remain unpublicized and, therefore, unduplicated because the individuals in charge of the programs define themselves as technicians, not writers. To complicate matters, the current oversupply of teachers has made the application of tighter more demanding standards for promotion a reality. It is now not uncommon that the instructor in a two-year institution--often an individual whose area of expertise never demanded that he or she learn to write for publication--must, to use the old phrase "publish or perish."

Our office has initiated a policy of helping technicians who perceive themselves as non-writers to overcome the hurdle of learning to write for publication in their areas of expertise. In designing a publication workshop, I have considered the learning psychology of the technical instructor as a non-traditional student, as well as the special needs of the STC {School of Technical Careers} staff.

2. The Two-Year Faculty Member as a Non-Traditional Student. My first problem was to define the audience. Since most participants will be 25 years old or older, four differences between the non-traditional adult learner and the adolescent student had to be kept in mind.

a. Adult students are even more impatient than their teenage counterparts with irrelevant curriculum. We must assume that any adult student has minimal time to devote to classroom concerns because he or she probably has extensive familial, professional, and social responsibilities from which many younger students are spared.

b. Although research has suggested that adults demonstrate great enthusiasm for new projects and learning experiences which they perceive as relevant to their interests, such learners experience at the same time an extreme fear of all learning situations in which they must be objectively tested. Fear of failure, while not absent in adolescents, becomes a most important characteristic of the non-traditional student.

c. Often--and this case applies especially to STC faculty--the adult student perceives him or herself as holding a job which puts him or her in a position of authority. Consequently, non-traditional learners need to perceive their instructor not as an authority figure but rather as a resource consultant with expertise in a given field and a warm interest in the students as equals. In summary, Jack Gibb, Director of Research at National Training Laboratories, has written:

> Adults often do not respond to the traditional extrinsic rewards of the typical classroom. Many adults require something other than the usual dependency relation between learner and teacher--new relationships for which neither the learner nor the teacher are adequately prepared. The typical knowledge-centered curriculum and method have even less perceived relevance for the adult than for the child.[b]

d. Piaget, Horn, and Cattell have pointed to the development of intelligence as creating one of the differences between adults and adolescents. "Fluid" intelligence, that is, the ability to absorb new knowledge rapidly and almost intuitively is high in adolescents. From about the age of 21 on this ability decreases. However, "crystallized" intelligence or the ability of the learner to acquire formally the knowledge of his culture can be increased greatly during adulthood.[c] Thus the teacher of adults needs to draw upon familiar analogues in presenting new material to workshop participants.

3. Application of the Definition of STC Faculty as Non-Traditional Students to the Design of a Publications Workshop. Planning the workshop drew on four of the concerns mentioned previously: relevance, fear of failure, the director as authority figure, and "crystallized" intelligence.

a. Relevance. The purpose of the workshop will be to have each member write in his or her area of expertise an article for publication.

b. Fear of Failure. Since for most participants the workshop will be a first experience in writing for publication, I propose the following steps to alleviate their fear of failure.

(1) The Workshop Size. No more than six faculty members will participate in the workshop. Preferably, they will all be from the same division so that they will have worked together before on problem-solving. We can generalize upon this attitude to create within the workshop a condition of collegial support and suggestions as writing occurs.

(2) Time Span. The workshop will meet for four one-hour sessions. Meetings one and two will be on consecutive weeks; two weeks will lapse between meetings two and three so that staff members can write rough drafts of their articles, and meeting four will be one week after meeting three. Thus within no more than six weeks a self-perceived non-writer will have the encouragement and the professional support to produce a publishable article in his or her area of competence.

(3) Professionalism. Members will be encouraged to work together to get the writing job done. At meeting one, for example, members will share ideas concerning important topics about which they can write in their fields. At meetings three and four, members will be encouraged but not required to read their manuscripts to each other and to receive suggestions from their colleagues.

c. The Director as Authority Figure. Some resentment toward the director is expected because staff members enrolled in the publication workshop realize that I represent a new direction their administrators are pursuing. I shall try to alleviate some resentment by holding informal meetings in the faculty lounge during a break in the instructor's day, using first names, and bringing the library to workshop members. By compiling comprehensive bibliographies in their areas of competence and handing them out at meeting one, I hope to start participants' working immediately in their areas of expertise. Hopefully, this effort will diffuse the presence of an outside "English-teacher" type as the workshop director.

d. "Crystallized" Intelligence. Fortunately, participants in the workshop need not come up against any objective measures--at least until they send off their articles for review.

Teaching of the technical writing needed for publication will be based on analogy. During meeting two, for example, participants will analyze and criticize outlines of already published articles. They will also study several articles as they have progressed from outlines, to rough drafts to final and published drafts. Names of authors will be deleted, but all the materials used will be work of people who have published successfully. Participants should see the "nuts and bolts" side of creating rough drafts for publication while learning to think of the author as a person, not a magician. Thus I hope they will develop a more positive attitude toward publishing their own writing.

4. Structure of the Publication Workshop.

Meeting I.

Objectives:
1. Target a journal.
2. Choose an article topic.

Method: Provide three types of bibliographies.
1. General (indexes of journals)
2. Specific (the group's professional concentration)
3. Issue-oriented post-secondary journals

Meeting II.

Objectives:
1. Define articles by type: research, theory, or practice.
2. Outline how to organize an article.

Method:
1. Discuss rough drafts and outlines of previously published articles.
2. Discuss style of the journal for which the article is addressed.

Meeting III.

Objectives:
1. Analyze rought drafts of articles.
2. Prepare copy for subsequent or final draft.

Method: Reading of articles and group discussion

Meeting IV.

Objectives:
1. Prepare final copy of article.
2. Discuss how to write a letter to the publisher.

Method: Reading and discussion of materials used by published authors

CRITIQUE OF WORKSHOP

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My assignment, I believe, is to summarize the workshop and then talk about the future. Several things that struck me might interest you. One, the section from the School of Technical Careers made me aware that two-year schools and four-year schools see technical writing quite differently. I think we need to recognize the differences as well as the similarities. The two-year school already has people committed to a two-year technical career. They have a course in technical writing that comes at the end, and thus view the writing as a real operation.

In the four-year college we are trying to develop our General Studies 118, a technical writing course for freshmen, as an extension of the basic 101 composition. And it has been amazingly successful. In three years it has doubled in enrollment from about 600 to 1200. The problem is that these students are not as yet committed to any kind of a direction. They're still shopping around. Yet they all are going to have to do some kind of formal reporting and therefore we're trying to think of ways to go beyond the essay and develop practical exercises.

But I've also counted in SIU's undergraduate catalog some 15 courses of various kinds of technical writing. So, it seems to me, that we've got to integrate our four-year program, not only to take care of our students, but also your transfers who come in and already perhaps have had more sophisticated work in this field than we offer. Another thing that struck me from this morning's discussion was the important role of the advisor in the technical field, and that's something we haven't solved either. The second workshop on teaching brought out the problem we face in staffing a big university program where most of our instructors are graduate students working for their M.A.'s and Ph. D's in a traditional program.

Mr. Bush's comment about the use of the consultant interested me. When I was an Assistant Professor, I wrote letters to all sorts of industries offering my services to save them money (and add to my income). My first bid came from Union Oil Company. They were developing new products, but they hadn't been able to get out progress reports on sales, marketing. They had just cut back the budget of the vice president in charge of research by 7% because they couldn't keep up with the production in their multi-million dollar research laboratory. The man who hired me said something like, "Look, I flunked freshman composition. I don't know how to write and we have to do something." I was able to help, so my next letter, that went to about 40 more firms, asked "Do you want to save 7%?"

The more invitations you have, the more opportunities you have to refine your skills. Union Oil in those days was a small company owned by a private family, so they weren't going to spend money on a full-time editor. Look to the smaller firms. When they get big enough to become a McDonalds, DuPont, or General Motors, they don't need your help. Look around to see what sort of industry is developing in your area. Perhaps when they get a big government contract and have a recording responsibility they might look to the consultant instead of hiring a lot of people to do the writing who will have to be fired in a short time. Such opportunities do exist regardless of where you live.

My third point has to do with publishing. My best teachers of writing were writers who wrote. They could write novels, poetry--it didn't make any difference. I can't imagine anybody who is a good teacher of writing who can't write himself or herself. There is nothing wrong with helping yourself and your friends get together and start your own little journal. All you need are 100 copies to send around to get it reviewed by a few people to get known, and then people will begin sending you material. The thing that we need to emphasize to our students, especially our graduate students, is that you can publish. What's happening in English as I see it is that we have a lot of professors who are training a lot of graduate students who feel there is no place for writing in the English literature curriculum. I think this is terrible--so much so that I'm not sure that English shouldn't be renamed "writing." If you teach literature just as a "rap" session, just as discussion, fine. But, nevertheless, writing is also a continuing responsibility.

Those of us who write for publication or who are concerned with writing are the people who ought to have the desks in the writing program. And as I see technical writing more and more into the English department, I think more and more we're going to insist that if you say your career is devoted to teaching writing you should also be writing and publishing. I do feel that these are the kinds of questions that we're trying to thresh out. We need to ask ourselves what kind of programs we can develop to train people professionally to meet this wide spectrum of obligations in which technical writing is one of the most important. So much for my summary of the workshop.

I have a few ideas about future workshops. They may seem parochial and oriented toward SIU, but since many of you come from comparable institutions they may be of interest. SIU is a natural laboratory for the study of technical writing. With 1800 people on the faculty, we have many programs. When I came to SIU all interoffice correspondence consisted of polite letters--long, diffuse, time wasting. Recently we changed over to the cold, businesslike "TO FROM" memo. The shift away from the old days to this new formality has been harmful

for faculty-administrative relations. On the other hand, the old type of "Dear Jane" or "Dear Joe" formal letter often got off the subject and was time wasting. I'm sure other institutions are going through the same transition. So there's much for us to do to look at our own interoffice, business, and technical communications, including the writing of proposals.

I mentioned earlier that 15 courses, nine in English, offered in the university, involve some form of expository writing. We need to think them through, to coordinate them, to decide what the advances should be and try to relate them.

There is a market for technical writing textbooks. With so many new publishers, you have open opportunities to examine the market. Look over the lists of the publishers to find one that interests you. See if their recent technical writing book is aimed at a junior college or a four-year school. Point out what is missing and tell them how you would fill in. Since publishers are interested in getting out these books and since more and more are coming out, we need to take a hard look at the worth of what is being included. Page after page may make them thick, but doesn't always add that much to the value of the content.

Use of forms is worth consideration in such texts. After I finished with the consultant's job with Union Oil mentioned earlier, I worked with the engineering division of the Shell Oil Company. Here I found that engineers who work out in the field who filed periodic reports, perhaps every six months, wanted forms for routine information so that they would have to turn in only what was essential. They wanted to know what they need and wanted it spelled out so that supplying the data could be done more easily. The Ph. D.'s were more theoretical; they didn't want forms. They wanted to discuss philosophically what was needed. This difference in temperament has to be respected, and often times can be helpful.

What about record keeping? Several years ago I was asked to help the towboat masters and the towboat engineers on the Mississippi River do something about their records. Management in St. Louis felt that these routine records were not being kept properly, but nobody had ever explained to the masters and engineers the purpose of the records. After the purpose was explained in terms of the needs of scheduling agencies, and other departmental units and governmental units, they were able to think of ways to devise simpler, better forms. You can help with such problems, and you can write about such problems, and you can write about such problems in the textbooks you write.

Finally, I would like to have this group meet with a group of psychologists in learning theory. I don't know about your experiences, but I find that over the years I have had students who can't spell, can't complete sentences, leave off "ed" from the past tense of verbs--yet, they are otherwise articulate, valuable people. I have a feeling that they have psychological

problems and that we are not going to help by continually saying, "Do this over, do that over," and then flunking them because they won't do it over. If you have a class of 25 or 30, you don't have enough quantitative evidence to reach any conclusions, but when we are teaching large numbers of students we can alert our instructors to think about such possibilities and we can begin to develop the quantitative data.

One last point has to do with reminding you that communication is not just verbal. It's also graphic. The old Chinese proverb, "One picture is worth 1,000 words," is true in technical writing. I would like to have a workshop where we could have people come in from graphics, from film, from other areas of visual aids such as our design department at SIU, where they are using visual design to get government contracts, combining written proposals with visual material.

Some years ago I had a group of students who were mechanical and electrical engineers. They met around a literary magazine. After graduation they worked for Hughes Aviation, but moonlighted and set up their own firm called Technical Communications, Inc. They took care of the total communications package: using cartoonists, artists, filmmakers, writers--whatever the reports called for. If you were a government contractor, they would take care of your weekly, monthly, quarterly reports. At one time they produced a $150,000 film that told in a five-minute animated cartoon why Vandenburg Air Force Base should be the base for a $500 million missile program. This example is technical communication--practical, competitive, and visual. It seems to me that one of our jobs as people who are concerned about the continuing use of words is to help make words do the kinds of things that the visual people cannot do--which means that we collaborate with them and win their respect. The possibilities are exciting.

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